THE VAGRANT DUKE

By GEORGE GIBBS

of "The Splendid Outcast," "The Yellow Dove," "The Secret Witness," Etc. Copyright. 1921, by D. Appleton & Co.

THIS BEGINS THE STORY Peter Nicholaevitch. Russian Nicholaevitch. Russian Grand Duke, exiled by revolution, Grand Duke, exiled by revolution, on this country as Peter Nichols, and takes charge of a nichols, and takes charge from the seep all strangers away from the seep all strangers away from the seeps, but the man McGuire fears heeks through the guard and leaves heeks through the guard and leaves heeks through the guard and nichols and and acquaintance and man is an old acquaintance and man is an old acquaintance and man is an old acquaintance and worse in the far West. The sead worse in the far West. The stranger, Hawk Kennedy, tells the stranger, Hawk Kennedy, tells the stranger, he slaying of Ben Cameron, their partner, by McGuire. Peter is the more inclined to believe the story the more inclined to believe the story was fired and Kennedy was a shot was fired and Kennedy was a shot was fired and Kennedy was injured. Peter is satisfied that Mc-dure fired the shot and later charges him with it. McGuire is startled to hear that Kennedy had told his story. "He talked—" Mc-Guire's poise was slipping from him.

old his story. "He talked him. AND HERE IT CONTINUES ONE moment, if you please. I want ONE moment, it you please. I want
this thing perfectly understood.
sur arrangements were cleverly made—
anging the guards—your instructions
me—the finshlight and all the rest.
iddn't want to kill me if you-could
pit. I'm obliged for this considerin. You forgot that your hand isn't
teade now as it was when you were endy now as it was when you were dead shot out in Arizona.—Ah! I see you already understand what I

hat you already understanding hear."
McGuire had started forward in his

hair, his face livid.
"You know—?"
"Yes. More than More than I wanted to know more than I would ever have known from you'd played fair with me. You ared nothing for my life. You shot, wice, missed killing your man and then the light went out, sneaked away the the coward that you are

ike the coward that you are
"D—n you," croaked McGuire
leebly, falling back in his chair.
"Leaving me to the mercies of your ncient enemy in the dark—who thought be your accomplice. You can hardly lame him under the circumstances. But I got the best of him—luckily for

"Thanks," said Peter, "I will. One tot of yours scraped Kennedy's shoult. He was bleeding badly, so I took in to be cabin and fixed him up. He as rather grateful. He ought to have en. I gave him a drink too—several laks. You said he wouldn't talk but You said he wouldn't talk, but

"You made him talk d-n you," Guire broke in hoarsely. He volunteered to talk. he insisted upon it. You see,

happened to have the gentleman's ac-"We met on the steamer com

Funny, isn't it?" To McGuire it seemed far from that, at this revelation his jaw dropped

he stared at Peter as though the ntire affair were beyond his compre-"You knew him! A waiter, you!"

"Yes, Misfortune makes strange edfellows. It was either that or star-lation. I preferred to wait."
"For—for the love of God—go on," rowled McGuire. His hands were

atching the chair arm and there was addens in his shifting eyes, so Peter tched him keenly. "I will. He told me how you and ad worked together out in Colorado,

pe had worked together out in Colorado, ip in the San Luis Valley, of the gold prospect near Wagon Wheel Gap, of its nilure—how you met again in Pueblo and then went down into the copper country—Bisbee, Arizona."

Peter had no pity now. He saw Mo-Peter had no pity now. He saw Mc-Guire straighten again in his chair, is gaze shifting past Peter from left

You got an outfit and went out into Gila Desert," continued Peter, sting his picture teleurely, delibwas horrible-the heat. erible pilgrimage to repny you for ali hat you suffered, you and Hawk Kennedy. There was no water but what you carried on your pack-mules—no water within a hundred miles, nothing out sand and rocks and the heat. No ance at all for a man, alone without horse, in that desert You saw the men and animals bleaching ing the trail. That was the death at awaited any man---

sprang for the tortured man as Guire's fingers closed on something n the open drawer of the table, ter twisted the weapon quickly out his hand and threw it in the corner

You fool," he whispered quickly he pinioned McGuire in his chair you want to add another murder what's on your conscience?"

But McGuire had already ceased to ist him. Peter hadn't been too genwith him. The man had collapsed.
stance at his face showed his condi"The Gila Desert ain't all yours, is glance at his face showed his coudietmed really old now to Peter, a hundred at least, for his sugging facial muscles seemed to reveal the lines of right. We'll take your leavin's. We've every event in his life.

eavy gaze slowly seeking Peter's.
"What—what are you going to do?" managed at last.

bis side," Peter lied. "What's of what was to happen.

right in his chair, staring up at Peter with bloodshot eyes.

"He's lied to you, if he said I done it—," he gasped, relapsing into the vernacular of an earlier day. "It was Hawk. He stabbed him in the back. I never touched him. I never had a thing to do with the killin'. I swear it—."

Peter's lips set in a thin line.
"So Hawk Kennedy killed Ben Cameron!" the said.
"He did. I swear to God—"

"He did. I swear to God—"
"And then you cleared out with all
the water, leaving Hawk to die. That
was murder—cold-blooded murder—"
"My God, don't, Nichols!" the old
man mouned. "If you only knew—"
"Well, then—tell me the truth."
That glanges met "stark was come.

"Well, then—tell me the truth."
Their glances met. Peter's was compelling. He had, when he chose, an air of command. And there was something else in Peter's look, inflexible as it was, that gave McGuire courage, an unalterable honesty which had been so far tried and not found wanting.

"You know—already," he stammered.

mered.
"Tell me your story," said Peter

tion, and then:

"Get me a drink, Nichols. I'll trust
you. I've never told it to a living
man. I'll tell—I'll tell it all. It may

not be as bad as you think.

"This—this thing has been hanging over me for fifteen years, Nichols—fifteen years. Its weighted me down, made an old man of me before my time. Maybe it will help me to tell some-body. It's made me hard—silent, busy with my own affairs, bitter against every man who could hold his head up. I knew it was going to come some day. I knew it. You can't pull anything like that and get away with it forever. I'd made the money for my kids—I never had any fun spending it in my life. I'm a lonely man, Nichols. I always was. No happiness except when I came back to my daughters—to Peggy and my poor Marjorie McGuire was silent for a moment and Peter, not taking his gaze from his face, patiently waited. McGuire glanced at him just once and then went on.

slipping back from time to time into the speech of a bygone day.

"I never knew what his first name was. He was always just 'Hawk' to same him unuer and the best of him—luckity for But I got the best of him—luckity for But I got the best of him—luckity for me—and disarmed him. If you had remained a few moments longer you might us boys on the range. Hawk Kennedy was a bad lot. I knew it up there in the San Luis Valley, but I wasn't no angel from heaven myself. McGuire, stifled with his fear and try, was incapable of a reply.

"Very good. So long as we under"Very good. So long as we underindex of the stifled with his fear and try, was incapable of a reply.

"Very good. So long as we undertand each other thus far, perhaps you still permit me to go on. As you know, and to you in good faith. I wanted help you in any way that a gentlehelp you on all right together. But the got on all r and talked big about the fortune he are been all right for you. And I are been all right for you. And I are been all right for you. And I solve been accused of the killing.

If I had been killed no harm would have if I had been killed no harm would have been done at all. That was your idea. I had some money saved up, too, and so I quit my job and went with him down to Bisbee, Ariz. I wish to God I never had. I'd gotten pretty well straightened out up in Pueblo, sendin' money East to the wife and all—.

"Thanks," said Peter, "I will. One if we and I had to hurry. But I could do it yet. Maybe this was my chance. That's the way I thought. That's why I happened to listen to Hawk Kennedy and his tales of the copper coun-

come into town all alone, get supplies and then go out again next day. He let slip semething over the drink one hen we were escaping from Russia. lowin' up. We struck his trail, all is name was Jim Coast then. He was right—askin' questions of greasers and waiter in the dining saloon. So was Indians. We knew he'd found somethin' good or he wouldn't have been so quiet about it.

Ben Cameron had found, stake out near im and get what I could. Hawk Kennedy had a different idea even then. I don't know. He never even then. I don't know. said what he was thinkin' about.

taken out any papers. He never though anybody'd find him out there in that hell-hole. It was hell all right. Even now, whenever I think of what hell must be, I think of what the gulch looked like. Just rocks and alkali dust

little thing that was said and done-every word. Ben Cameron saw us first -and when we came up, he was sittin' on a rock, his rifle acrost his knees, a hairy man, thin, burnt-out, black as a

ds gaze shifting passed animal. His to right like a trapped animal. His fingers groped along the chair arms, along the table edge, trembling, eager but uncertain. But the sound of Peter's narrative seemed to fascinate—

The second of the se

Desert, my little man, says Hawk, po-lite as you please. 'It's hell that's here and here it will remain.' And then the sand, the rocks—but you weren't we said we were short of water—which going to full this time. There was we were not—and had he any to spare? going to fail this time. There was we were not—and had he any to spare? But he waved us on with his rifle, never sayin' a word. So we moved down the gulch a quarter of a mile and went into amp. nothin' like what Ben Cameron had.

about among the rocks, but the rifle over his knees-been there all night. I reckon. But he let us come to

hailin' distance."
"'Nice claim you got there, pard-

says Hawk. "They're my pants,' says Cameron 'You ain't here for any good. Get out'

don. So Peter poured out a glass of thisky and water which he poured between his employer's gaping lips. Then he whited, watching the aid man. He he waited, watching the old man. He our stakin' alongside of you, have you'

though scarcely sixty, yet broken and helpless. He came around slowly, his leavy gaze slowly seeking Peter's. at all to see what he'd got. He wasn't "Nothing. I'm no blackmailer." eyed, rum-dumb—poor, too. You could had then, playing his high card, "I've see that by his outfit—worse off than we had a lot of tron," said Peter. "Nothing to be seen that by his outfit—worse off than we had a lot of tron," said Peter. "Nothing to be seen that by his outfit—worse off than we had a lot of tron," said Peter. "Nothing to be seen that by his outfit money—hig money in the said Peter. "Now tell me the friends with money—big money in the At the sound of the name McGuire a railroad out to tap the whole ridge.

You know had no friends in this part of the counen Cameron, like me, unsuspectin

nedy and his tales of the copper coun-"Well, we got an outfit in Bisbee and set out along the Mexican border. We had a tip that led us out into the desert. It was just a tip, that's all. But it was worth following up. It was about this man Ben Cameron. He'd come into town all alone get supplies

"I swear to God I had no idea of nrmin' him. I wanted to find what

"We found Ben Cameron. Perched up in a hill of rocks, he was, livin' in the hole he'd dug where he'd staked his claim. But we knew he hadn't

and heat.
"It all comes back to me.

"Don't be pokin' jokes at the Gila There was ore here, too, but

"Hawk was quiet that night-creepdidn't say what was on his mind. In the mornin' he started off to talk to Ben Cameron an' I went with him. The man was still sittin' on his rock, with

ner,' shys Hawk.

'' 'Is it?' says he.

'' 'Ain't you afraid of rubbin' some o' that verdigris off onto your pants?'

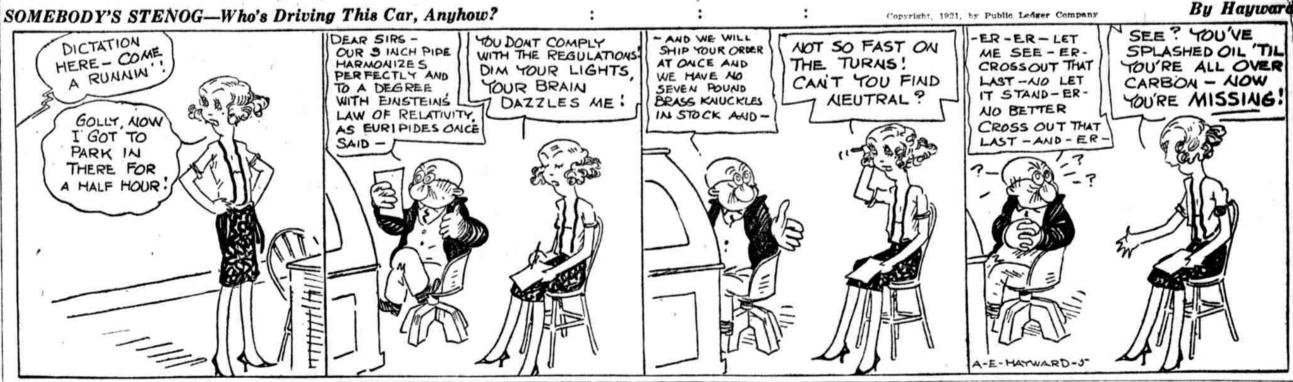
saw he was scared all right, maybe not so much at what we'd do to him as

ou know-everything," he mut- try-so we sat down to grub together

CONTINUED TOMORROW



SOMEBODY'S STENOG—Who's Driving This Car, Anyhow?



The Young Lady Across the Way



The young lady across the way says she doesn't suppose anybody really knows after all these years whether George Washington really landed on Plymouth Rock or just

THE ABSENT-MINDED PROFESSOR By FONTAINE FOX U,LL. WHEN THERE HAPPENS TO BE A FLOWER BED IN HIS COURSE THE ABSENT MINDED PROFESSOR CERTAINLY PUSHES A WICKED LAWN MOWER.

By DWIG SCHOOL DAYS THE SAVING GRACE

By Beeze MOVIE FAN—And That Ends That SO-MISS FILLUM- YOU MERELY YES INDEED- I AM THE QUEEN! OSH- IF THEY'RE GOING WELL- HOW DOES IT FEEL GET THE PART OF A CIRCUS-GIRL! TO START THIS CIRCUS TO BE A LADY ? COMEDY I WISH THEY'D J MAYBE YOU'RE GOING TO HURRY UP ABOUT IT-BE THE KING'S WIFE- WHAT?

